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PRESS RELEASE

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101 Young Nigerians to attend 2017 Mandela Washington Fellowship Program

The U.S. Mission to Nigeria will send 101 young Nigerians to participate in the 2017 Mandela Washington Fellowship program for six weeks from June 15 to August 3. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is the flagship program of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). It is composed of academic coursework, leadership training, and networking. A total of 5 out of the 101 fellows will remain in the U.S. at the conclusion of the fellowship for internships of six more weeks.

Through this initiative, 40 U.S. universities will host 1,000 young leaders from Sub-Saharan Africa for institutes focused on public management, business and entrepreneurship, civic leadership, and for the second year, a specialized institute on energy.

As part of the orientation, the Embassy invited four leading Nigerian professionals to participate in a mentoring workshop. Mr. Frank Nweke, Global Falcons; Mr. Tonye Cole, Sahara Energy; Mrs. Toyin Saraki, The Wellbeing Foundation Africa; and Mr. Eyo Bassey, Payporte Global Systems, each shared unique perspectives on leadership and opportunity. When asked what he might have done differently in his career, Mr. Cole remarked, “I wish programs like this existed.”

In his remarks, the U.S. Embassy Counselor for Public Affairs Mr. Aruna Amirthanayagam explained more than 22,000 Nigerians applied to participate in the 2017 Mandela Washington Fellowship program. “After the review by our partner NGO, after a reading by members of the Mission Nigeria community, after an interview in Abuja, Lagos, Jos, Kaduna, Enugu, Port Harcourt, and Calabar, a total of 101 young Nigerians were selected”, he said.

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Mr. Amirthanayagam also said the selected fellows, “along with 899 colleagues from 48 other sub-Saharan countries, will have the opportunity to engage students, professors, and professionals on the campuses of 40 universities, colleges, and institutions across the United States, from the University of San Diego in California to Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, and many place in between.”

He continued, “Secretary Tillerson addressed my colleagues at the State Department last week about regional issues and said, ‘the continent of Africa is a continent of enormous opportunity, and needs and will get, and will continue to receive our attention’.” Amirthanayagam went on to say, “You are our partners no matter your track – business and entrepreneurship, civil leadership, public management, or energy policy – because all of these, in one way or another, contribute to our shared priorities – strengthening democratic institutions, supporting economic growth, advancing peace and security, and promoting opportunity and development.”

The Mandela Washington Fellowship and the larger YALI program has become the model for exchanges in Southeast Asia, the Americas, and in Europe. They include the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAII) and the Young Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative (YTIIL).

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